CHAPTER II.

ADVENT OF TRAPPERS AND TRAVELLERS.

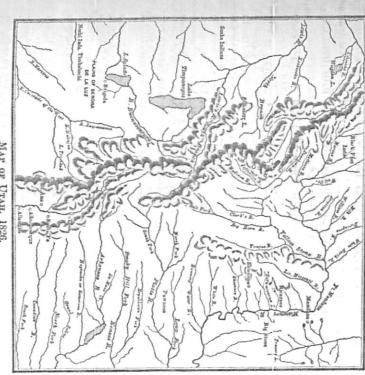
1778-1846.

Invasion by Fur Hunters—Baron la Hontan and his Fables—The Popular Geographic Idea—Discovery of the Great Salt Lake—James Bridger Deciding a Bet—He Determines the Course of Bear River and Comes upon the Great Lake—Henry, Ashley, Green, and Beckwourth on the Ground—Fort Built at Utah Lake—Peter Skeen Ogden—Journey of Jedediah S. Smith—A Strange Country—Pegleg Smith—Wolfskill, Yount, and Burton Traverse the Country—Walker's Visit to California—Some Old Maps—The Bartleson Company—Statements of Bidwell and Belden Compared—Whitman and Lovejoy—Frémont—Pacific Coast Immigrations of 1845 and 1846—Origin of the Name Utah.

Half a century passes, and we find United States fur hunters standing on the border of the Great Salt Lake, tasting its brackish waters, and wondering if it is an arm of the sea.[1]

[1] There are those who soberly refer to the Baron la Hontan and his prodigious falsehoods of 1689 for the first information of Great Salt Lake. Because among the many fabulous wonders reported he somewhere on the western side of the continent placed a body of bad-tasting water, Stansbury, *Exped.*, 151, does not hesitate to affirm 'that the existence of a large lake of salt water somewhere amid the wilds west of the Rocky Mountains seems to have been known vaguely as long as 150 years since.' Perhaps it was salt, and not silver that the Winnebagoes reported to Carver, *Travels*, 33-6, as coming down in caravans from 'the mountains lying near the heads of the Colorado River.' Warren, in *Pacific Railroad Report*, xi. 34, repeats and refutes the La Hontan myth. He says, 'the story of La Hontan excited much speculation, and received various additions in his day; and the lake finally became represented on the published English maps.' Long before this date, however, reliable information had been received by the Spaniards, and the same may have come to English trappers; so that by 1826 reports of the existence of such a sheet may have reached civilization. It is needless to say that neither La Hontan nor Carver ever received information from the natives, or elsewhere, sufficient to justify map-makers in placing a large lake in that vicinity. In Gordon's *Historical and Geographical Memoir of the North American Continent*, published in Dublin in 1820, it is written: 'Concerning the lakes and rivers of this as yet imperfectly explored region we have little to say. Of the former

First among these, confining ourselves to authentic records, was James Bridger, to whom belongs the honor of discovery. It happened in this wise. During the winter of 1824-5 a party of trappers, who had ascended the Missouri with Henry and Ashley, found

we have no certain account. Two have been noticed in the western parts, a salt lake about the thirty-ninth degree of latitude, the western limits of which are unknown, and the lake of Timpanogos, about the forty-first degree, of great but unascertained extent.'

Map of Utah, 1826.

In a report submitted to congress May 15, 1826, by Mr Baylies it is stated that 'many geographies have placed the Lake Timpanogos in latitude 40, but they have obviously confounded it with the Lake Theguayo, which extends from 39° 40′ to 41°, and from which it appears separated by a neck or peninsula; the two lakes approaching in one direction as near as 20 miles.' *19th Cong., 1st Sess., House Rept. No. 213.* Such statements as this amount to nothing—the honorable gentleman, with all due respect, not knowing what he was writing about—except as going to show the vague and imperfect impression of the popular mind concerning this region at that time.

I will give for what it is worth a claim, set up in this same congres-